

## Michael Castleman

Okay, so welcome everybody to Sex and Love with me, your host, Dr. Emily Jamea. I am honored to be joined today by Michael Castleman. Michael Castleman and I have connected a few times, and this is actually our first face-to-face meeting.

So I am happy to finally have this opportunity to talk more in-depth with him, and I know everyone here is going to enjoy this discussion. I know I'm looking forward to it. So before we dive in, let me tell you a little bit about who Michael Castleman is.

So Michael Castleman is a sexuality journalist and is the most popular sex writer in the world. His twice-monthly blog on Psychology Today, All About Sex, launched in 2009 and attracts 300,000 views per month, and he has amassed a total of 53 million views. His Q&A site, GreatSexGuidance.com, launched in 2010 and has attracted thousands of questions and another two million views.

Castleman has written about sexuality for 47 years. In addition to his web presence, he has written about all aspects of sexuality for many magazines, including Reader's Digest, Men's Health, and Playboy, where he answered all the sex questions sent to the Playboy Advisor for five years. Unlike many psychologists, educators, and therapists who focus on sex, Castleman's sex writing is all entirely evidence-based.

His most recent book, Sizzling Sex for Life, cites more than 2,500 studies, and he has had lots of positive reviews from many experts in the field, and so I am so excited to talk a little bit more about all of his work today on today's episode. So thanks again for joining us. Thank you for having me on, Emily.

Yeah, and did I get all of that right in your intro? Oh yeah, you're great. Okay, great. And as we were talking a little bit before I began recording, and I told him that I always just assumed that he was a sex therapist, and it wasn't until I began preparing for today's interview that I realized his background is actually in journalism, and he is a sex writer, and he's really the only journalist, it sounds like, whose work has focused almost exclusively on sex.

So I'd love to hear just a little bit about your story and how that came to be your focus over the years. Well, back in the 1970s, I was an aspiring journalist, and I needed a job, and I got a job at a community clinic in Michigan that was basically a family planning clinic, and family planning is a very female field today, and it certainly was in the 1970s. And so I was like this odd guy doing family planning counseling and hearing lots of women fetch that, oh, you know, why don't men take some responsibility for birth control? So I started writing about that for community newspapers, and writing about contraception got me into interested in sexuality, and I was writing for a community newspaper, and Valentine's Day was coming up, and the editor of the paper said, "Mike, we need a cover story called How to Make Love, and you're the guy." And I said,

absolutely not. What do I know? I'm 23 years old. And he said, well, but you live with your girlfriend, don't you? Presumably you have sex.

I said, yeah, I do, but that doesn't mean I can write about it. So he wound up, the editor wound up calling up my girlfriend, who's now my wife, and begged her to convince me to write the article, which she did. And what she said to me was, "come on, Mike, write about sex."

You might learn something. So that was in 1973. I wrote that article, How to Make Love, and since then, I've just, it's a fascinating field, and it is a field that many, many journalists write about sex occasionally.

You know, there's newspaper stories, this sex study, that sex study. But nobody but me that I know of really focuses on it exclusively, almost exclusively. I write about some other things, too, but I've focused on sexuality for almost 50 years, and I know a lot of the researchers in the field.

I know prominent sex therapists. They've become my friends, and so this is like my gang. Yeah.

And sex is endlessly fascinating, and we are living in an age where there's more sex research published today than at any time in human history, and almost none of it gets out of the journals, out of academia, to the public. And so that's my role, to translate, to take published sex research and make it accessible to people who are out there searching on Google. Exactly.

I mean, we need people to break it down because it's easy to get lost in the statistics, and reading a research paper can be really confusing, and so I do think you have a really important role to play in bringing to light some of these, you know, more obscure findings. Well, thank you. I'm almost at 300 blog posts now.

So, you know, I post twice a month, and I cover a broad range of subjects, really, you know, just about anything that's interesting that I feel that a substantial public would be interested in learning about. Right. And I think, you know, what you say is so true, that there's more sex research available today than at any other time in history, and I think something that obviously humans have been doing since the beginning of time is something we're really only starting to understand.

And, you know, I'm glad that finally the spotlight is on this very normal, natural part of living, and that, you know, people like you and me, hopefully, can, you know, continue to shine light on that and to get the message and the information out to the general public. Let's hope. Yeah, yeah.

So we originally connected about your latest book, Sizzling Sex for Life, and do you want to begin just by telling people a little bit about that book? Well, Sizzling Sex for Life is my

third and probably last sex guide. I'm now 71 years old, and I, you know, I just don't know how much longer I can keep it up, as it were. But I've written, I wrote two previous sex guides.

I wrote one in my late 20s, when I was writing for young men, and I was answering questions for Playboy. I wrote one in my mid-40s, when I was a father of two young kids and dealing with midlife sexual issues. Now I'm in later life, and the impetus behind *Sizzling Sex* was to look at sexuality throughout the entire lifespan, from the sexual implications of circumcision in infancy to the growing phenomenon of partner sex in nursing homes, from young to old and everything in between.

And it's the kind of book that you really can only write when you're an old guy, and you've had, you know, the experiences of a lifetime. And so *Sizzling Sex*, I wanted it to be to be a lifespan book, and I also wanted it to be entirely evidence-based. I really, the older I've gotten, the more I have come to believe that it's really important to cite your sources and to honor the tremendous amount of excellent sex research that there is out there that no one pays any attention to.

And I hasten to add that a lot of research, a lot of sex research is, you know, boring and trivial, but a fair amount of it is interesting and important and compelling, and people should know about it. And so that's what I write about. And I decided to do a whole book on a comprehensive cradle-to-grave sex guide, talking about the ingredients of great sex, sex problems, sex for men, for women, for everybody.

And I've been gratified. The responses have been very nice. And it took three years to write that book.

And that's with starting with a knowledge base going back almost 50 years. So it was pretty intense. Yeah.

Labor of love, sure. It was fun. And I'm very glad that it's gotten a good reception.

Yeah, I love it. And I referenced my copy. And what I like about it is it's almost like an encyclopedia.

I mean, anyone can flip through the table of contents and just pick and choose a subject that they're interested in. It's not necessarily a book that you have to read cover to cover. And so I really have found it to be an excellent resource for so many of my clients, no matter what life stage they're in, or what kind of problem they're dealing with.

Well, thank you. Yes. I don't expect anybody to read it cover to cover, except maybe my wife and mother.

But my kids haven't read it cover to cover, but they use it as a reference. And so do their friends. And when something comes up, it's usually there.

The table of contents and the index in *Sizzling Sex*, the book covers just about every common sexual issue that you could imagine. And I mean, there are some it doesn't. And for those, I'm hoping for a revised edition some years from now.

Yeah. I'm curious, you know, thinking back over your career from the time you were in your 20s, answering questions for Playboy subscribers, you know, up until your midlife, answering questions from that group of people. Can you talk a little bit about the kinds of things people came to you with back then? And, you know, at different life stages, what what themes you noticed emerged? Well, Playboy subscribers back in the what decade would this have been in? I answered Playboy advisor questions from 1991 until 1995.

Okay. So I was already in my 40s when I was doing it, even though the magazine's demographic is a bit younger. The questions are always the same.

Everyone goes through life and everyone goes through stages of life having to learn the tasks of that stage. And so every day, new young people are becoming teenagers and sexual. And every day, new people are becoming middle aged and starting to wonder, oh, my God, what happens to sex now? And then millions of people are getting old and thinking, oh, my God, can I be sexual? And so I think it's important to understand that that sex is confusing for everybody at every stage of life.

But sex is also reasonably explicable and you can learn to enjoy and adjust to changing circumstances. Right. Everyone is having to change how they live and make love based on what's happening in their lives.

You become a parent and all of a sudden there is no spontaneity ever again. Everything has to be planned. Yeah.

You have kids leave the nest and all of a sudden you can like make love in the living room if you want. But you're old and you're thinking, oh, my God, my arthritis, my this, my that, I got pain. So I try to address sexuality throughout the lifespan in the stages that people experience it.

So there's a whole lot of stuff about, you know, sex education, how to talk to your kids about sex, how to have sex for sex education in schools, you know, young adult hookups, sex during parenting and a lot about sex in the elderly, which is a huge field now that, you know, until 1998, when Viagra was approved, the conventional wisdom was that after about 60, everybody stopped having sex. It was like there was no research on older sex because people felt there wasn't any. Yeah.

Then with Viagra, there's been an explosion in the last 25 years, an explosion of research into elder sex. And guess what? Older people, they self-sex, they make love with partners. And, you know, I'm 71 and I can tell you that the sexual world of old people is

fascinating and interesting.

And if you have a decent partner and you know what you're doing, it's lots of fun and very satisfying. So if you're young, you can look forward to a lifetime of sizzling sex if you read my book. Yes.

And I think, you know, what you're talking about and a point I always try to hammer in with my clients is about adaptability. You know, you talk about adapting to whatever circumstances you find yourself in in life, whether it's, you know, early parenting, like I'm in that cycle right now. I've got two young children and, you know, what you're saying is true.

Suddenly you have to be very more into, you know, very much more intentional about everything. And, you know, but I think as long as you have a partner with whom you can talk about these issues and have good communication skills and really, I think at the end of the day, have a growth mindset, right? That things are going to change and it's more a matter of your ability to change with the circumstances and ultimately adapt that will make or break a sexual connection. Right.

With sex, when there's a will, there is always a way. Yeah. You can be quadriplegic and have a reasonably satisfying sex life.

Right. And one of the things, one of the key skills throughout the lifespan is sexual coaching, telling your partner what you want. And, you know, if I had a nickel for every time some sex person said, oh, communication is the key, I'd be a billionaire.

But the problem is that people don't tell you exactly how to communicate. And so that's why I have a whole chapter in *Sizzling Sex* called *Sex Coaching Made Easy*. Yeah.

How to ask for what you want. Yeah. Which is very daunting to a lot of people.

And I can speak from experience. You know, it's hard for me. It's hard for everybody.

But there's a substantial amount of research and a lot of clinical experience that shows that it's not that difficult to coach your lover about sex if you both have a sense of humor and you both realize that that people's feelings change over time. And so the if you, you know, like, I mean, I fell in love with my wife when I was 20 years old and we, you know, were hot and heavy like rabbits for quite a while, like everybody is when they first fall in love. But then after that, you know, desire differences develop and you really have to negotiate every little thing about sex to keep it fresh and to keep and to keep it loving and kind.

And you have to understand the the importance of novelty, doing new things, doing new things revs up your libido. And so, you know, those weekend getaways, romantic getaways, they really are romantic because they represent a change. Right.

Right. I think a lot of people hear novelty and they think they have to bring out the whips and chains and handcuffs and that sort of thing. But sometimes something as simple as a change of scenery can, you know, bring a freshness to the sexual experience.

Oh, yeah. And a change of time of day. A lot of old people just don't have a lot of sexual energy late at night.

So, you know, they used to make love at 11 p.m. to midnight. Now, forget it. Now, now it's like four in the afternoon, you know, before dinner.

Right. The early bird special applies to sex, too. I'm embarrassed to say that's true.

But just little things, little things. And the other problem with communication is that when people hear, oh, you have to communicate, a lot of people infer that you have to, like, make proclamations and deliver speeches like you're talking to the United Nations. No, no.

Sexual coaching can be very, very simple. All you have to do is say yes when you like something. Yeah.

And remain silent when you don't. Right. And I think that, you know, a big piece of communication.

Yes, you can coach someone on how to speak up about what they like. But the other side of that is being a good listener and being receptive and making the change. And I think that's where a lot of couples fall short is you may put something out there, but then it doesn't really go anywhere.

Do you speak to that some in that chapter? Yes. Yes. The, you know, obviously coaching is a two way street, but you have to receive the information that's being offered.

And a lot of that, a lot of the static that people feel is that when some lover makes a request, they think, oh, that's not normal. And oh, that's weird. And why do you want that's not who? That's not what we usually do.

Right. And the great truth of the last 70 years of sex research is that the more scientists look into sexuality and lovemaking, the more diversity they find. Everybody is different.

And there is only one universally valid sexual generalization, and that is everyone is uniquely sexual. Everyone is sexual in their own way. And yes, there are general trends.

You know, most people enjoy intercourse most of the time if they can accomplish it. Right. But everyone is sexually unique.

Yeah. And that means that when you are in a relationship, you're unique and so is your lover. And when people approach sexual negotiation that way, it's easier to hear, I want

this or I don't want that, because that's just their taste.

I mean, you know, like everyone has a hand, but no one has your fingerprint. Right. Exactly.

Exactly. So I love what you said earlier about how we have so much more research coming out about sex in older populations, because I think a lot of even though we have that, I mean, I look at some of the comments on my social media posts, and I think a lot of people still still subscribe to the idea that good sex dies when the honeymoon phase ends and sex in later life that there's really nothing to look forward to. And as much as I try to convince them otherwise, I think maybe I'm not the one they're looking to for that because I'm still, you know, in the kind of childbearing years myself.

But what would you say are some of the three, let's say three most exciting things that people can look forward to about sex in older age? Well, one is that male and female sexual sensibilities converge. So in young life, among young people, men are often done before women have even gotten interested. So men are supercharged with libido.

Women often take a lot of warm up time. And so the guys already come and the woman hasn't even like gotten aroused. Well, in later life, men's arousal happens much more slowly.

And a lot of men think, Oh, my God, I can't get aroused. Yes, you can, you can get aroused, you just have to be a little patient. And you just have to have an erotic context.

And you have to have a an alluring lover and you have to have erotic focus. But yes, men of my age, you can get aroused, you just have to be patient. And so the fact that men slow down, that can actually be a tremendous boon to relationships, because men and women are more in sync.

And there's less, less contention about, well, you know, you're, you're, you're done before I get turned on. Right. So that's one key thing.

I think something else is that people have more life experience. And they are less likely to say, Well, that's not how it's done. Yeah.

And now, now, some attitudes as people get older, some attitudes harden. So you know, there is some hardening of attitudes. But among couples who enjoy lovemaking late into life into older years, there's, there's a playfulness.

And there's a sense that yes, we are unique. And we, we can do this, we can have fun. This is play.

Sex is adult play. A lot of young people, a lot of young men view sex as conquest. And a lot of young couples view sex, you know, procreatively.

Right. But actually, lovemaking is adult play. And how you play changes over time.

Yeah. And the playgrounds that you visit, they change too. But you can still have a lot of fun.

Yeah. So I think that's about conquest or procreation and more about play and connection. Yes, the it's really about pleasure.

And, and enjoying each other's intimate company. And I also think it's very important to maintain a sense of humor. Because you just, you know, even when most even when people are young, most people don't look like swimsuit models.

Well, when you're old, nobody does. And you really have to have a sense of humor about how bodies change. But what doesn't change is the ability to become erotically aroused, the ability to be satisfied and satisfy someone else, that never changes up until your dying day.

So what I can say to younger people is, hey, stay healthy. And you can look forward to a full life of great sex, if you know what you're doing. Right.

Definitely. Definitely. Now, is most of what you focus on in the book about maintaining sizzling sex in monogamous relationships, would you say? Or do you talk some in the book about open relationships or non-monogamy? Because I think that's something that, you know, when I first started working as a sex therapist, maybe 10, 15 years ago, non-monogamy was something that came up for my couples, maybe once every six months or so.

Now it's something that we see a lot more out there in the literature and popular media. And people bring it up, you know, at least once a week as a possible option for them. And I think a lot of people look to that as a solution for sex that has kind of stagnated.

So I'm curious what you what your take is on that. Well, there's a whole chapter in *Sizzling Sex* about consensual non-monogamy. And by that, I mean, if not affairs, this is when everything is above board, and everyone is on board, and struggling with how you do that.

Yes, your experience of hearing much more about polyamory and non-monogamy in recent years, reflects the fact that very slowly, but surely, our culture is learning that there's more than one way to play. And, I mean, I grew up in the 1950s, when monogamy was all there was, and intercourse in the missionary position was pretty much all there was. And something that's almost universal, like oral sex, was considered, you know, risqué, and, you know, unusual.

Yeah. But as I mentioned, the more we look into sexuality, the more diversity we find. And the trend toward people being willing to discuss non-monogamy and play that way,



has soared.

The same is true of BDSM. BDSM used to be considered this wacky fringe, you know, whips and chains thing. And that has began to change 20, 30 years ago.

But what really did it was the publication of Fifty Shades of Grey, the BDSM romance novel trilogy, which in just five years became the best-selling work of fiction of all time. 150 million copies of that book have been sold. And just for sake of comparison, one of the biggest mega bestsellers in history was The Da Vinci Code.

And that took 10 years to sell 25 million copies. Fifty Shades of Grey sold 150 million in half that time. So people are... And it's one of those books that we all think, why didn't I write that? Right? Well, I wish I wrote that book.

I know. So here again is an example where diversity, more people are into BDSM than anyone ever imagined. And more people are into consensual non-monogamy.

Now, when people say that they're in an open relationship, that doesn't mean they're going to, you know, 10-person orgies three nights a week. Not like that at all. For most people, monogamy is still pretty much where it's at.

And consensual non-monogamy is an occasional pleasure, a spice, you know, something for somebody's birthday, for their anniversary. I know couples, for example, who... I know a longstanding couple who've been together probably 30 years. And they're generally monogamous.

But on the woman's birthday, she likes to have a threesome. So they do. And so, yes, they're non-monogamy.

They're non-monogamous, you know, a few times a year. Right. But not generally.

And if you search on the web, there are sex clubs and swing clubs and BDSM clubs in every major metropolitan area of the United States, and in most rural locales, too. In fact, you if you just search, for example, BDSM and anywhere, you might be very much surprised at how much is out there. Right.

And the ability to connect with other people who are interested through the use of apps and stuff that, you know, we didn't even have five years ago. Correct. Yes, the Internet has made it much easier for small slices of the population to get in touch.

So it's no coincidence that things like BDSM and consensual non-monogamy and intersex and asexuality have become much more visible because folks who are involved in those wrinkles of sexuality can find each other so much more easily just with a Google search. Definitely. Definitely.

Yeah. And so I think I love that your book covers all of that because it sounds like there's

a lot of information in there for couples who choose to remain monogamous and want to find ways of keeping sex hot over the course of their relationship. And there's information in there for couples about, you know, who want to perhaps open things up or step a little outside of, you know, monogamy to see what that's like.

Right. And I'm not for a moment going to suggest that non-monogamy is easy. Yeah.

No relationship is easy no matter what flavor of relationship you have. So monogamy is difficult. Non-monogamy is difficult.

BDSM has a million challenges. Sexuality is complex in many ways. But it's also quite simple.

The body wants to be sexual. The body is capable of pleasure. And if you can talk to each other and coach one another, you can have a good time.

Totally. Totally. Now you historically have written a little bit more about male sexuality.

Is that right? Yes. What would you say are some of the biggest myths around male sexuality in your research and in your writing and your experience working with men? Well, you know, sexuality used to be in a male field. I mean, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, you know, even though Johnson was a woman, it was Masters who was like driving the car.

Today, sexuality and sex therapy is increasingly a female field. And that's good because women have been held down and held in subordinate positions and their opinions have been denigrated historically. And so it's great that women are asserting a leadership role in the field.

I love that. But the flip side of that is that half the people out there having sex are still men. And men have all kinds of issues that really don't get addressed very well.

And as a man, I try to focus on male issues that don't get addressed. So, for example, I think one very important one is frequency of masturbation. Now, self-sexing is virtually universal.

Everybody does it at least a little. And the discussion used to be, oh, my God, you know, it's, I'm going to go to hell. No, the rejoinder is no, self-sexing is normal.

And you can believe that self-sexing is normal. Millions of men out there know that self-sexing is normal, but they do it so frequently, they think something must be wrong. On my Q&A site, I have gotten hundreds, hundreds of letters from men, all of which say something like, I have yanked so often, so hard for so long, it's a miracle the thing is still attached.

Men use masturbation in a way that's different than the way women use it. Women use it

for pleasure. Men use it for stress relief.

There have been surveys that have asked people, why do you engage in solo sex? About 25% of the women say it helps me with stress. 80% of men say that, 80%. So, self-sexing is really a stress management regimen for many men.

And a lot of women object to that on various grounds. One is that, well, you shouldn't be sexual with anybody but me. Sorry, everyone has the right to solo sex, and it's really not about you, it's about them, and it's about their needs.

And so, I kind of admonish women who say, oh, he shouldn't masturbate because that's okay when he was single, but now that we're married, I mean, he shouldn't need that. Yes, he does. He needs that.

Some sexual autonomy in a relationship. Exactly. I mean, he needs that just like women who are married still need friends.

No one can meet everybody's needs all the time. So, the frequency of self-sexing is something that is very critical to understanding men. The other thing is that the sex problem that gets all the press is erectile dysfunction.

But that's not the number one sex problem among men. It's premature ejaculation. Ejaculatory control is by far the biggest sex problem that men have, and it is a tremendous killer of self-esteem.

Yeah. I mean, I had this problem when I was younger, and I started writing about sex. When I wrote that first sex article, I read some books, and I read Masters & Johnson, which had just come out.

This was Masters & Johnson's book, Human Sexual Inadequacy, which invented the field of sex therapy. That came out in 1970, I believe. 1969 or 70.

I was writing in 1972, 1973. So, it had just come out in paperback. So, I thought, all right, for this article, I'll read this book.

I was shocked. I thought, oh my God, they have a cure for premature ejaculation, which I, as a 23-year-old kid, was suffering. So, I went to my girlfriend, and I said, okay, you wanted me to write this article? I wrote it, and guess what? I want you to help me with this.

So, she did, and what was astonishing to me was, I got cured in like a month. Yeah. And usually, for most men, premature ejaculation, ejaculatory control is a learned skill.

It's fairly easy to learn. Right. And so, there's a big chapter in Sizzling Sex for Life with all the evidence of how you do it, and there are different approaches, all of which have a place.

But once men can control themselves, once men have ejaculatory control, generally, they relax about lovemaking. They become much more, they understand, the static goes away. Yeah.

The other thing about curing premature ejaculation is that the cure for it is for men to make love less like porn actors, and more like the way women like to make love, which is leisurely, playful, whole body massage that eventually leads to genital caresses. When men learn how to gain ejaculatory control, women gain lovers who have a clue about women. So, I think it's very important for sex therapists and sex educators to discuss premature ejaculation because it's not just about giving men a skill, it's about giving couples happiness because the guy can hear, finally, what makes women tick, sexually. Yeah. And that's when couples come in, whether it's one person in the relationship complaining of inability to orgasm, or the other person complaining about inability to get an erection, or whatever it may be, the first thing I always try to do is reframe it as a, this is not a you or you problem, this is a couple problem. And it's so important that you both work together towards the solution, because in the end, it will benefit both of you.

Not only does it benefit the sex, but it helps the relationship. I mean, when my girlfriend helped me learn ejaculatory control, I really appreciated that. Yeah, great.

And I learned a lot more. And we were, you know, I mean, it's 50 years later and we're still together. So yeah, everything you say is true.

I totally agree with what you said. When you're less worried about how long you're going to last, you can focus on the pleasure, which ultimately should be the point, right? Pleasure and connection. Exactly.

Exactly. Yeah. Now, as I was preparing for this, I was reading through some of your other titles, and it looked like one of your more popular books was about natural, like herbal medicinal remedies.

Is that right? Yeah. I'm curious what you've found in the research, because people ask me all the time about natural supplements for sexual issues. And I typically tell them that I don't know of any really quality scientific literature that has found that anything helps significantly.

But since you wrote a book on about that and have written so much about sexuality, I'd like to hear your two cents. Um, well, yes, I, um, I spent my career writing about health defined broadly to include nutrition, fitness, sex, staying well, you know, alternative therapies, mainstream medicine, all that. And over the years, I focused more and more on sexuality, but I spent a whole lot of time researching herbal medicine.

And, you know, herbal aphrodisiacs is like a huge thing. I mean, you go down the aisle of the health food store, and there's, you know, male performance supplement, female this,

you know, filled with dozens of herbs, and you go, Oh, my God, you know, does this stuff work? Yes, and no. There is some research to show that at high doses, some herbs, like maca, or tribulus, or ginseng do help sexual performance.

But the supplements that you see on health food store shelves generally contain much lower doses of these things than the research shows is effective. So I, I would caution people don't expect some herbal supplement to change your sex life. In fact, nutritionally speaking, the best way to enjoy sex is to eat a plant-based diet that's low in fat, get regular exercise and don't get diabetes.

Yeah, once you have diabetes, it's sex becomes increasingly difficult. And now, both men and women, yes. And these days, it's something like 20 to 25% of Americans have diabetes or a prediabetic condition.

Gosh, I didn't know it was that high. Because yes, because we are, as a nation, we have gained a lot of weight. Yeah.

In the 1960s, the typical man weighed 170 pounds. Today, the typical man weighs almost 200 pounds. And that contributes to a great deal of diabetes.

And once you get diabetes, and you're, which affects the circulatory system, and you don't get the blood flow to the genitals that you used to get. So men have diabetic-related erection impairment. Women have diabetes-related loss of clitoral sensitivity and loss of self-lubrication, vaginal lubrication.

So the nutritional elements of lovemaking have less to do with supplements that you take. And a lot more to do with how you just eat in general. And I recommend a low fat diet that is plant-based.

You don't have to be totally vegetarian. I'm not. But I have a plant-based diet.

And you want to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day, preferably seven or eight. Unfortunately, the typical American eats only two or three. And the most widely eaten vegetable in America is French-fried potatoes, which have so much fat in them that they kind of defeat the purpose of eating vegetables.

So instead of shopping for the perfect sex supplement, my advice is just eat a salad. Yeah, right. There you have it.

Just eat a salad. We were talking before I started recording, I was telling you you're based in the Bay Area. And I've just returned from spending some time out in California.

I've never eaten more fruit in my life. I mean, we would just go to the farmer's market every day. And just, oh, the fruit out there just doesn't even compare to what we get over here.

Yes. Yes. You have so many options out there.

We have great fruit, but we have a lot of earthquakes, wildfires. You can't have it all. So yeah.

But wherever you are, fruits and vegetables are accessible. And I really urge people to eat them for health and longevity. And the longer you live, the longer you have to enjoy great sex.

Yeah, definitely. Let me just ask you kind of one final topic that I'm sure you cover in the book is the role of hormones, because I think that people are both men and women are too quick to attribute hormonal changes to sexual issues, particularly desire. I see this a lot in women going through menopause.

And I'm just curious what you have found in the literature as it relates to hormones. You're right. Hormonal changes have tremendous impact.

And for women, particularly women after 40, the menopause isn't something that hits on your 50th birthday. For most women, menopausal changes start in the early 40s and continue through the mid 50s. And those changes are predictable in that, yes, there's going to be some change.

But beyond that, they're very unpredictable in how they're going to affect individual women. And so some women sail through menopause and don't even notice it very much. Other women have serious stability.

And most women suffer some loss of libido. And part of this has to do, you know, there's various theories. Oh, I'm at the end of my childbearing years.

So what's the point of sex? And I'm gaining weight and I'm not as attractive and all that. There's like a secondary loss of libido due to maybe, you know, mood swings or night sweats or weight gain versus a primary effect of change in hormones. Yes.

But what the research shows that is not widely known is that the sexual changes of perimenopause and menopause generally occur at the front end. So women who are just going into menopause often feel more libido loss. Women by around age 55, a lot of women recover a fair amount of their libido that they lost.

They have made their peace with being post-reproductive. They have- their relationship has made their peace with getting older at that stage of being in their 50s. And couples who make a priority of being sexual together and being affectionate often find that, you know, they still can.

By the same token, men are, you know, young men are absolutely driven by this rocket of testosterone, which makes them, you know, instantly arousable and porn star

erections and all that. Well, as men get older, testosterone declines. And but not enough to destroy libido.

If a man suddenly feels absolutely no sexual interest at all, then he should see a doctor and maybe a testosterone supplement is indicated. But for the typical guy who is just getting older and is thinking, oh, you know, I gained 10 pounds, I'm not as attractive, I can't get, I don't get aroused as easily. That's not a testosterone problem.

That is testosterone is not going to help you. In fact, it may encourage you to get prostate cancer. So the role of hormones is very important in sex, but sometimes people overstate it.

Right, right. And I do not personally recommend that people, that men rush into hormone treatment, which there's a lot more of now. Hormone prescriptions, testosterone prescriptions to men have tripled in the last 20 years.

And there is no indication that testosterone clinical deficiency has increased. And so men just think, oh, I'll pop this pill. And, you know, it becomes a placebo that is potentially problematic.

So I don't I urge men not to look at testosterone as some kind of panacea, because it simply is not. Right. I think what you said earlier is so true that, you know, when you were talking about women who are postmenopausal, that, you know, they eventually recover and they get to a place where they make peace with some of the changes.

And I think if people, both men and women, would give themselves a little bit more time to adjust and make peace with whatever change they have gone through, that a lot of freedom can be found in that. It's just a matter of being patient through the process, right?

Yes. Unfortunately, most of us are not patient, myself included. And so when sexual problems arise, there's a sort of panic.

Yeah. That occurs. And I've been there.

You know, I've had my own sexual issues in my own life, in my marriage. And it's sometimes hard to think straight when you're faced with difficulties. And that is why sex therapists can make a living.

And that is why sex journalists can write things that hopefully people will pay some attention to, because maybe it'll help them. Yeah. Well, tell, thank, first of all, thank you so much for talking with me today.

I found our conversation fascinating and I know everyone else will too. Where can people find out more about you and, more importantly, get your book? Well, you can go to

sizzlingsexforlife.com, which talks about the book. And you can also see custom reviews on the book's Amazon page.

And if you're interested in asking me a question or reading some of my blogs, you can go to greatsexguidance.com. That's my Q&A site. Or you can go to Psychology Today and read my blogs there. Awesome.

So lots of places to find more about what you have to say. I'm not hiding. Okay.

All right. Well, thank you so much for your contribution to today's episode and in Sizzling Sex again. It's on my bookshelf right over there as something I have recommended to clients a lot already.

And so I know everyone can learn something from this book. So thank you for that. Well, thank you, Emily.

It was a delight finally meeting you, even if it's on Zoom. And thank you for having me on. I really appreciate it.

All right. Well, thanks again and until next time. Okay.